

GOV. ROOSEVELT'S "EXACT PARALLELS."

BY EDWIN D. MEAD. 1849

GOV. ROOSEVELT's letter of acceptance is mainly devoted to the discussion of imperialism. "He presents here," says one of his leading supporters, "an argument based upon the history of the former expansions of the country, which, although not absolutely novel, has not been elaborated before with so much force and cleverness. His own extensive studies in American history make him at home here." If Mr. Roosevelt is at home in American history, and especially in the history of the Louisiana purchase, which is the chapter of history which he chiefly discusses, he has concealed the fact in his letter with a cleverness which is certainly conspicuous. He says:—

The parallel between what Jefferson did with Louisiana and what is now being done in the Philippines is exact. He intended that ultimately self-government should be introduced throughout the territory, but only as the different parts became fit for it, and no sooner. . . . Years elapsed before the Louisianians were given self-government, Jefferson appointing the governor and other officials without any consultation with the inhabitants of the newly acquired territory. . . . The great majority of the inhabitants, white and colored alike, were bitterly opposed to the transfer. An armed force of United States soldiers had to be hastily sent into the territory to prevent insurrection, President Jefferson sending these troops to Louisiana for exactly the same reasons and with exactly the same purpose that President McKinley has sent troops to the Philippines. . . . As soon as the present revolt in the Philippines is put down and order established, it will undoubtedly be possible to give the islands a larger measure of self-government than Jefferson originally gave Louisiana.

These are Mr. Roosevelt's six points. Every historical scholar surely knows that every one of them is utterly misleading and most of them false. Mr. Roosevelt knows it. I say it to his praise; for his credit as a scholar is more important

than his fame in melodrama. A historical scholar Mr. Roosevelt is; and if I were sure that readers would turn to his own chapter upon the purchase of Louisiana, in his work upon "The Winning of the West," where he has treated the subject as a historian, instead of as a reckless partisan, I would gladly stop here,—for I should much prefer to let him refute himself. There is no better account of the Louisiana purchase and the events following it than that there given by Mr. Roosevelt, save only the account by Henry Adams in his history of Jefferson's administration; and the account makes shipwreck of the impression given in his letter of acceptance, besides emphasizing in a more striking and powerful manner than any other account whatever the point of most fundamental importance in the whole matter, upon which point his letter of acceptance is absolutely silent.

The parallel between our relations to Louisiana and our relations to the Philippines fails at every point of controversy or of significance. A condition of the cession of Louisiana was the distinct provision that the inhabitants "shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States" and in due course admitted to statehood. A regular territorial government with an elective Legislature and a delegate to Congress was given the portion of Louisiana which contained almost the entire French and Spanish population of the territory, March 2, 1805, less than fifteen months after we took possession, with clear understanding that statehood was to follow in a few years, as it did. There was no such degree of disaffection of the people to the change as Mr. Roosevelt intimates. There was no danger at any time of insurrection

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against the United States government, springing from such disaffection, and no hasty sending of troops to Louisiana "for exactly the same reasons that President McKinley has sent troops to the Philippines," — nothing whatever that can truthfully be so described. The Spanish minister at Washington, four months after the purchase, protested against it, declaring that we had bought stolen goods and that Spain was the rightful owner; and his protests were so energetic that Jefferson sent a strong body of troops to Natchez. "The government of Spain," he wrote, "has protested against the right of France to transfer, and it is possible she may refuse possession, and that may bring on acts of force." Some of the militia thus assembled, together with a volunteer company of horse, accompanied Wilkinson and Claiborne to New Orleans, as an escort, to take possession and to garrison the forts, from which the Spanish garrisons were being withdrawn; but this was with no thought of a popular insurrection. Jefferson sent his troops to Louisiana not to subject the people of the territory, but to meet the threats of the government of Spain.

"As soon as the present revolt in the Philippines is put down," says Mr. Roosevelt, "it will undoubtedly be possible to give the islands a larger measure of self-government than Jefferson originally gave Louisiana." Here is the disingenuousness of the partisan. By "originally" Mr. Roosevelt means simply the provisional government given Louisiana immediately, pending the organization of a regular territorial government; he says nothing of any farther hope or promise, and is silent, in drawing his "exact parallel," about the great pledge and recognized ultimate obligation, in the light of which every early and provisional act in Louisiana was to be interpreted. The third article of the treaty of cession provided that "the inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the federal constitution, to the enjoy-

ment of all the advantages and immunities of citizens of the United States." Does Mr. Roosevelt find an "exact parallel" to this in the treaty of Paris, by which the Philippines were ceded to the United States? Did Laussat blue pencil this article, in acquainting the people of Louisiana with the provisions of the treaty, in his proclamation? It was the article to which he directed special attention, the one thing in his proclamation which he printed in italics; and he added:—

Thus are you, Louisianians, suddenly invested with the rights and privileges appertaining to a free constitution and government, secured and guaranteed by the force of arms, cemented by treaties, and tested by time and experience. You will be incorporated with a nation already numerous and powerful, renowned besides for its industry, its patriotism, and the degree of civilization and knowledge it possesses, and which by its rapid progress seems destined to the most brilliant rank that a people ever enjoyed on the face of the earth. By the nature of the government of the United States, and of the privileges upon the enjoyment of which you immediately enter, you will have, even under a provisional government, popular rulers, whose acts you will be at liberty to censure or to protest against with impunity, and who will be permanently in need of your esteem, your suffrages, and your affection. The public affairs and interests, far from being interdicted to your consideration, will be your own affairs and interests, on which the opinions of wise and impartial men will be sure to exercise, in the long run, a preponderating influence, and to which you could not even remain indifferent without exposing yourselves to bitter repentance. The time will soon come when you will establish for yourselves a form of government which, although respecting the sacred principles consecrated in the social pact of the federal union, will be adapted to your manners, your usages, your climate, your soil, and your peculiar localities.

Does Mr. Roosevelt find an "exact parallel" between this proclamation and that of President McKinley in the Philippines, in December, 1898, even after General Otis had done his utmost editorial work upon it? Does he find any parallel in any address to the people of the Philippines by General Otis, or President Schurman, or Judge Taft, to the address by Commissioner Claiborne upon taking possession of Louisiana in the name of the United States, in which, repeating the declaration of the treaty,

he assured the people that "the United States received them as brothers, and would hasten to extend to them a participation in the invaluable rights forming the basis of their own unexampled prosperity?" Does he find the account of any ceremony in Manila parallel to that by which, in the presence of Laussat, the French prefect, and Claiborne, the right of the people to choice of allegiance was recognized?

Whether the transfer of sovereignty in Louisiana from France to the United States was the occasion of violence to many tender ties may be judged from the fact that the French domination had lasted just twenty days, after a Spanish government of thirty-four years. The news of the annexation to France had been welcomed at New Orleans with general rejoicing, as was natural, for the city was more French than Spanish; but the representative citizens hastened to assure Laussat that they had "no cause of complaint against the Spanish government." Both Spanish and French would, doubtless, for the most part, have preferred French sovereignty to American; but resistance to the transfer of the province there was none, and there was largely indifference. Mr. Roosevelt assured us four years ago that the French at New Orleans accepted their rapidly changing fates "with something very much like apathy," their joy at cession to France being "tepid," and their feeling toward us being that of "a puzzled distrust." The chief thing at which they murmured afterward was our prohibition of the importation of slaves into Louisiana. Mr. Roosevelt was uncertain, four years ago, whether their murmurings "did or did not comport with entire loyalty to the United States government." He is probably not uncertain today as to the feeling we have earned from the people of Luzon, and whether that feeling is expressed in something plainer than murmurings.

When Laussat received notice of the cession to the United States, he at once gathered, he tells us, "what Louisiana possesses of most respectable and distinguished, within thirty miles, in point

of reputation, virtue, talent, influence, and wealth," explained to them the situation and asked their co-operation, which was courteously promised. The Spanish commissioner, recognizing the interchanges as mere formalities, offered the services of their own troops to the French until the arrival of the Americans. "From the moment of the cession," Laussat wrote, "Casa Calvo (the Spanish governor) has behaved toward me with exquisite politeness." So far from the time of these mutations being a lugubrious time, it was a time of mutual festivities and big dinners. A large number of young Frenchmen, sons of the best families, joined the volunteer battalion organized by the American consul to police the city until the arrival of the American commissioners, and the historian says: "The French, by their zeal, vigilance and patriotism during their time of service, proved themselves worthy of American citizenship."

The Frenchmen did not love us; why should they? They were silent enough when their flag went down and ours went up—and we do not think the worse of them for that. But they did not regard it as any blow or menace to their political aspirations; there was no parallel whatever to the feeling which drove the people of Luzon to war. The Spanish royalists hated us and our republicanism; a few sisters of charity thought the world was coming to an end; but the mass of the people accepted the change with complacency, as they had accepted five other similar changes which had occurred within the lifetime of men then living. The Spanish officers stayed in New Orleans for a year, making mischief; presently Aaron Burr came, trying to foment treason there as in other places in the Southwest, inside and outside of Louisiana; and the city was full of filibusters—largely, it must be confessed, Americans—plotting against Mexico. What trouble there was in Louisiana sprang from these three sources; any popular uprising or opposition, from any class of the people, offering any analogy whatever to the

resentment and resistance in Luzon, never appeared and never impended. The people certainly had grievances enough; and if they had made more protest than they did, it would not have been to their discredit. Most violent things were said about them in Congress—some of the worst by Massachusetts men. Our two commissioners, sent to organize them, were as unsuitable and offensive as President Schurman and Judge Taft have been intelligent and courteous. Here Mr. Roosevelt's parallel fails again,—and for once to our credit. Schurman and Taft have been good men in bad business: Claiborne and Wilkinson were bad men in good business. What trouble there was in New Orleans sprang not from bad politics, but from bad manners. It was the arrogance and vulgarity of the Americans, contrasting so rudely with the civility and refinement of Laussat, that exasperated the better people of New Orleans. Major Stoddard, the governor sent to St. Louis, was a gentleman; and "in all the changes there," the historian of St. Louis tells us, "the public peace, or course of business or amusement, was not checked or disturbed; on the contrary, the kindest and most hospitable feeling everywhere manifested itself." The abuses which ensued at New Orleans would have been rectified immediately if it had not taken months to exchange communications with Washington, instead of a few hours, as in the case of Manila. The provisional government was limited by law to one year; but in deference to the remonstrances from New Orleans, regular territorial government was instituted even before that term expired, with the promise of statehood to Louisiana as soon as her population reached 60,000, the number fixed for statehood in connection with the Northwest territory. As a matter of fact, Louisiana was admitted to statehood before either Indiana or Illinois; and two other states, Missouri and Arkansas, were conducted from the Louisiana purchase, while Michigan and Wisconsin of the old Northwest territory still waited for statehood. Our promise to treat the

Louisiana territory according to our regular principles in dealing with our other territory was faithfully and absolutely kept.

This is the sum and substance of the politics of the Louisiana question. What was the common sense of it? The Louisiana purchase, which doubled the area of the United States, comprised almost a million square miles, almost the entire region between the Mississippi river and the Rocky mountains north of Texas. The dozen states created from it have now a population of perhaps fifteen millions; but in 1803 it was practically uninhabited. Roving over the whole territory were perhaps 30,000 Indians. The total negro and white population was not twice that number; and the Louisiana question really resolved itself into the question of the few thousand French and Spaniards in and about the city of New Orleans. The white population of the territory was already largely American. In upper Louisiana, the St. Louis region, there were at the time of the cession, 5,000 Americans, against 3,760 French and Spanish together. In the Baton Rouge district the Americans were "in a great majority;" and in other districts "a considerable part," says the official report, were American. There were doubtless more Americans than Spanish; and in ten years, even if there had been no cession, there would have been more Americans than Spanish and French together—for our people were everywhere pushing into the territory, whose rivers were their great highways of trade. It is not at all improbable, in view of all the facts and clear tendencies, that could a popular vote have been held upon the cession in 1803, it would have approved it; it certainly would have, by the natural American increase, while men were still wondering whether it would or not. The "consent of the governed"—and more than that, the urgent demand of the governed, as Mr. Roosevelt, the historian, so impressively shows—potentially existed, and everybody knew it.

Who were the few thousand Frenchmen at New Orleans concerning whom

all this pother is about, and what were their real feelings toward the country? The great work on early Louisiana history is that by Charles Gayarré; and this is what he says, speaking of the generation before the cession:—

Those who came to Louisiana never considered that they had found a home in her bosom. With the exception, perhaps, of the Acadians and of the Germans, whom Law had sent to the colony in 1722, those whom she received in her lap were not grateful for the hospitality, and deemed themselves miserable exiles. All the military officers and other persons employed by the government had but one object, that of obtaining promotion for their services here, and of making money, by fair or foul means, according to their different dispositions, in order to return with ampler means of enjoyment to their cherished native country. With regard to the population not composed of officials, a good many had been transported to Louisiana by force, and detested a country which they looked on as a prison. Others had been deceived by wild hopes and exaggerated representations of what they were to expect in Louisiana. They smarted under the anguish of disappointment, and if they labored at all, it was to acquire means to get back,—and they even impregnated their offspring with these notions. Louisiana was a mere place of temporary sojourn, nothing better than a caravansary, but no home for any one. There were none of those associations, not a link of that mystic chain connecting the present with the past and the future, which produce an attachment to locality. The waters of patriotism had not yet gushed from their spring to fertilize the land.

If this does not exactly describe the French sentiment at New Orleans in 1803, it almost describes it; and it exactly describes the Spanish sentiment. Parallel between this sentiment and the patriotism of the Filipino people, their love of home, their identification with the soil, the devotion which created their armies for their struggle for independence, there is none. In the one case, a few thousand unattached and miscellaneous squatters, all told not equal in number to the population of Springfield, Mass., rapidly being outnumbered by us in natural course, with no desire or dream of independence or distinct national life; in the other, an immense permanent people, with generations of association and tradition, intense lovers of their country, and the aspiration for freedom and independence their master

passion. This is what the "parallel" between the people of New Orleans and the people of Manila comes to. The parallel between our subjugating army of 70,000 men, who in no possible time of peace will ever be followed to Luzon by 7,000 American exotics, and the American people in their natural relations to Louisiana in 1803, can best be considered in the description of the latter by Mr. Roosevelt, the historian. Upon this point, the crucial point in the whole matter, Mr. Roosevelt, the imperialist candidate, is silent; but the express purpose of Mr. Roosevelt's chapter on the purchase of Louisiana, in his history, written only four years ago ("The Winning of the West," vol. iv., p. 258, etc.), is precisely to show that there is no parallel between "gaining territory by armed force and retaining it by treaty" and the conditions of our acquisition of Louisiana. This is what he says—and it is the whole truth of the matter:—

"In 1802 American settlers were already clustered here and there on the eastern fringe of the vast region which then went by the name of Louisiana. All the stalwart freemen who had made their rude clearings and built their rude towns on the hither side of the mighty Mississippi were straining with eager desire against the forces which withheld them from seizing with strong hand the coveted province. . . . The winning of Louisiana followed inevitably upon the great westward thrust of the settler folk. . . . The navigation of the mouth of the Mississippi seemed to them of the first importance. . . . Upper Louisiana was owned by the Spaniards only in shadowy fashion, and could not have been held by any European power against the sturdy westward pressure of the rifle-bearing settlers; it is improbable that its fate would even have been seriously delayed had it remained nominally under the control of France or Spain. . . . The mouth of the Mississippi was held to be of right the property of the United States. . . . Even Jefferson could see that for the French to take Louisiana meant war with the United States. . . . A faithful French agent sent a report to Napoleon plainly pointing out the impossibility of permanently holding Louisiana against the Americans. He showed that on the western waters alone it would be possible to gather armies amounting in the aggregate to 20,000 or 30,000 men, all of them inflamed with the eager desire to take New Orleans." The Spaniards left Natchez because they were "fairly drowned out" by the American settlers and soldiers; they now felt the same pressure upon them in New Orleans. "The surrender of Louisiana"—this was Mr.

Roosevelt's sensible conclusion — " was due primarily to the steady pushing and crowding of the frontiersmen. It was not the diplomats who decided its destiny, but the settlers of the western states. The growth of the teeming folk who had crossed the Alleghanies, and were building their vigorous commonwealths in the northeastern portion of the Mississippi basin decided the destiny of all the lands that were drained by that mighty river. The steady westward movement of the Americans was the all-important factor in determining the ultimate ownership of New Orleans."

Was it crowding American settlers, and not armies and diplomats, who decided the destiny of Luzon? Even Mr. Roosevelt in 1900 will not press the parallel. In truth, there are no parallels which are skin deep. In connection with the changes in Louisiana there was, we all well know, some personal hardship and grief, such as is incident to almost everything in life; there was a good deal of hyper-theoretics on the one side and the other; there was some playing fast and loose with obligation; but these were most superficial and temporary things — and did not affect for a moment the nation's course. We took formal possession of a territory where we were sure to be in an actual majority on the morrow; we promised the people the same treatment given the people in the rest of our territory; and we faithfully kept our word. That is the whole of the Louisiana story. No, there is one thing more; and for my own part I am very glad to add it, in the words of Mr. Adams: We proved once for all "that the hopes of humanity lay thenceforward, not in attempting to restrain the government from doing whatever the majority should think necessary, but in raising the people themselves till they should think nothing necessary but what was good."

Does Mr. Roosevelt see only an "exact parallel" between this chapter of our history and the chapter in the Philippines, which began with Mr. McKinley's proclamation of December, 1898; no difference between this and the procedure by which a great republic bought a rotten title to the sovereignty over a whole people in the throes of revolution, struggling for freedom and

independence — a people, moreover, who had trustingly fought by its side against the common enemy — and then, with its superior resources supplanting the former sovereign, turned to subjugate them to its own ends, expressly refusing them for any future any pledge of citizenship, either through independence or incorporation, making them forever men without a country?

Mr. Roosevelt, in speaking of the attitude of his opponents on finance, says: "They are either insincere or sincere in their championship. If insincere, they, of course, forfeit all right to belief or support on any ground. If sincere, then they are a menace to the welfare of the country." If Mr. Roosevelt is sincere in professing that he can see only an exact parallel between Jefferson's attitude toward Louisiana and McKinley's toward the Philippines, then surely never was a man more unfit to be intrusted with the guidance of a great republic.

In truth, Mr. Roosevelt knows well that Mr. McKinley intends no "ultimate self-government" in the Philippines like that which was a thing of course to Jefferson for Louisiana. He knows that no sane or sincere man who did intend it would fight inveterately any declaration of that intention — which declaration would instantly bring peace and friendship. He knows what the high pledge was which was given to Louisiana in advance, while the people of Luzon have waited vainly for any pledge whatever as to their ultimate status, such as might content them with any fair provisional government; and he knows that the administration has persistently refused, and that he would refuse today, that pledge, which is the only thing of moment when we talk of "parallels." He knows that what this election is about is to determine whether the American people will declare, by their indorsement of Mr. McKinley, that they count it safe and right for this republic to do this thing.

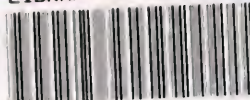
I shall not follow Mr. Roosevelt to Florida or Texas or New Mexico. All tell one story. The Louisiana case is the great case, and that on which men

like to ring the changes. I think that I have shown that it has no bearing on the case now before the country, nor on the whole question of imperialism. The very words of the pledge to the people of Louisiana became the form in which we plighted faith to succeeding acquisitions. It was not until the taking of the Philippines that — it is understood at Mr. McKinley's own instance — we refused any pledge, and declared that we reserved it to ourselves to determine the civil rights and political status of the people of the ceded country. It was then that the republican way, on our part, was supplanted by the imperial

way, and that the parallelism between our past and present ceased.

We have a right therefore to ask that, whatever appeals for the present course may be valid, the appeal to history cease. Appeals to precedent even in behalf of good and wise policies are often slavish; the false appeal to precedent, to whitewash wickedness, is pitiful indeed. It may be that we are fated to be the ancestors of generations that can see no difference between our course in Louisiana and our course in Luzon; but let us not be so cowardly and impious as to plead that we are descendants of such men.

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